a game of you

part six

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the SANDMAN™

SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS

neil gaiman

shawn mcmanus

TWENTY MINUTES BEFORE SHE GETS HERE, AND I'M REALLY NOT LOOKING FORWARD TO THIS.

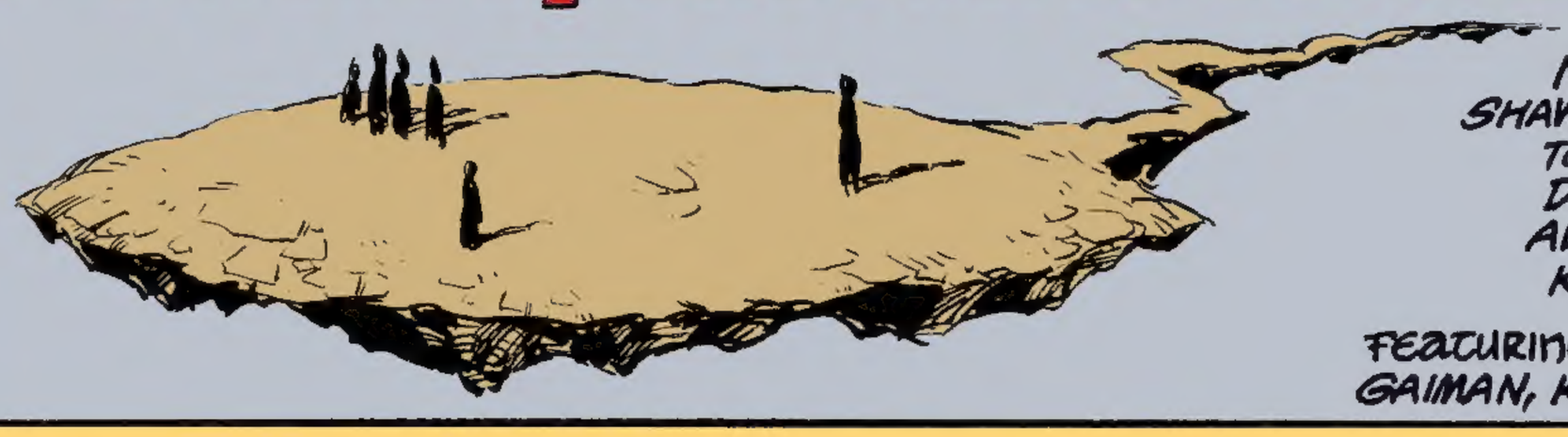
PART OF ME IS SCREAMING JUST TO GET ON THE NEXT GREYHOUND BUS AND GET OUT OF HERE. BUT I'VE BEEN BUS-HOPPING FOR THREE DAYS NOW. SIXTEEN HUNDRED MILES...

I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS IS HAPPENING.

APPLY MAKE-UP. BREATHE DEEPLY.

TRY NOT TO REMEMBER.

6: "I Woke Up and One of Us Was Crying."



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FEATURING CHARACTERS CREATED BY GAIMAN, KIETH & DRINGENBERG

MISTER *MURPHY*? ARE YOU GOING TO *DO* ANY-THING ABOUT THE CUCKOO?

Do anything?

Saving only your boon, I have done all I came here to do, Barbara.

BUT SHE STILL HAS TO BE *STOPPED.*

Why?

WELL, SHE'S *DANGEROUS.* SHE'S *EVIL.*

Dangerous? Perhaps.

But evil? She acts according to her nature.

Is that evil?

LISTEN. SHE WAS GOING TO *KILL ME.*

And your Thessalian friend wanted to kill her. Should I kill Thessaly for you, also?

DON'T PUSH YOUR LUCK, DREAM KING.

I DON'T.

I, UH, I THINK HE WAS JOKING, THESS.

But you played your part in the Cuckoo's deeds also, Barbara.

Afterall, it is your fault that she was bound to this skerry and could not leave it when her time came to fly, after the manner of her kind.

Mm. Yours and Rose Walker's, I should say.

ROSE? WHAT'S SHE GOT TO DO WITH THIS?
ROSE WALKER?
I KNEW A ROSE WALKER. SHE WAS JUDY'S TOKEN STRAIGHT FRIEND. MULTI-COLORED HAIR?
YEAH.
HMM. SMALL WORLD.
If any have wrought evil, it is your friends, who walked the moon's road into your dreams.
WE WERE ONLY TRYING TO HELP HER.
I know.
YOU--YOU SAID WE WERE TRESPASSERS HERE. THAT--THAT YOU'RE NOT PLEASED WITH US.
No. I'm not.
ARE YOU GOING TO DO ANYTHING BAD TO US?
Do anything? No.
SOMETIMES INACTION IS ITSELF ACTION, OF COURSE.
Of course. As I said, you are trespassers. You came here without my cognizance, nor with my consent.
You must pay the price for that.

LORD MORPHEUS?

Yes, Thessalian?

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THIS PLACE WE'RE STANDING ON, WHEN YOU GO, AND BARBIE GOES?

Hmm. I will leave it here for you. It would be unfair to remove it.

SO YOU'LL JUST *LEAVE* US HERE? IS *THAT* WHAT YOU'RE SAYING?

Can you give me any reason not to?

BUT. BUT. WE ONLY *CAME* HERE BECAUSE WE THOUGHT BARBIE WAS IN TROUBLE.

So you have said.

TCH.

Barbara? When I first created this land, quite some time ago, I made a compact with the woman for whom I created it.

It was...a compromise...

But she died, when her time came, and the compact remained uninvoked.

You have invoked the compact. The first half is completed--the land's time is done--now the final pact only remains.

You may ask a boon of me.

WHAT KIND OF A BOON?

Any boon that it is within my power to give.

CAN I ASK YOU TO *KILL* HER? THE CUCKOO?

Certainly. If that is to be your boon.

HMPH. THIS BOON OF MINE. COULD YOU REMAKE THE LAND? MAKE IT ALL *AGAIN*?

AND BRING *BACK* WILKINSON AND MARTIN TENBONES AND-- AND *EVERYONE* AGAIN? ALL MY *FRIENDS*?

Certainly.

Indeed. If you wish me to.

Well?

I DON'T KNOW. LET ME THINK.

BARBIE? TELL HIM TO ELIMINATE THE CUCKOO. I'LL GET THE REST OF US BACK HOME SOMEHOW.

TRUST ME ON THIS.

OH, SHUT UP, THESSALY.

I'VE GOT A BOON, HUH? OKAY. I'LL TAKE THE DOROTHY OPTION.

I WANT TO SEND US ALL HOME, ME AND HAZEL AND FOXGLOVE AND THESSALY. I WANT US BACK SAFE AND SOUND.

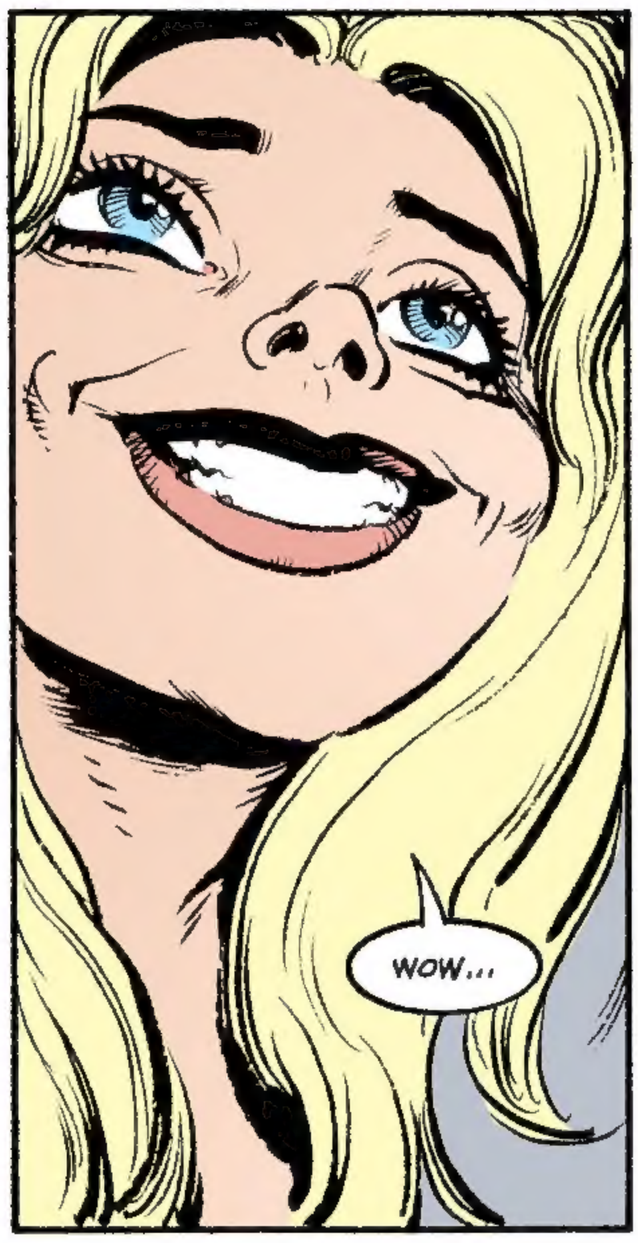
Very well.

DOES THAT MEAN I CAN FLY?

Yes.

THANK YOU.

GO AWAY.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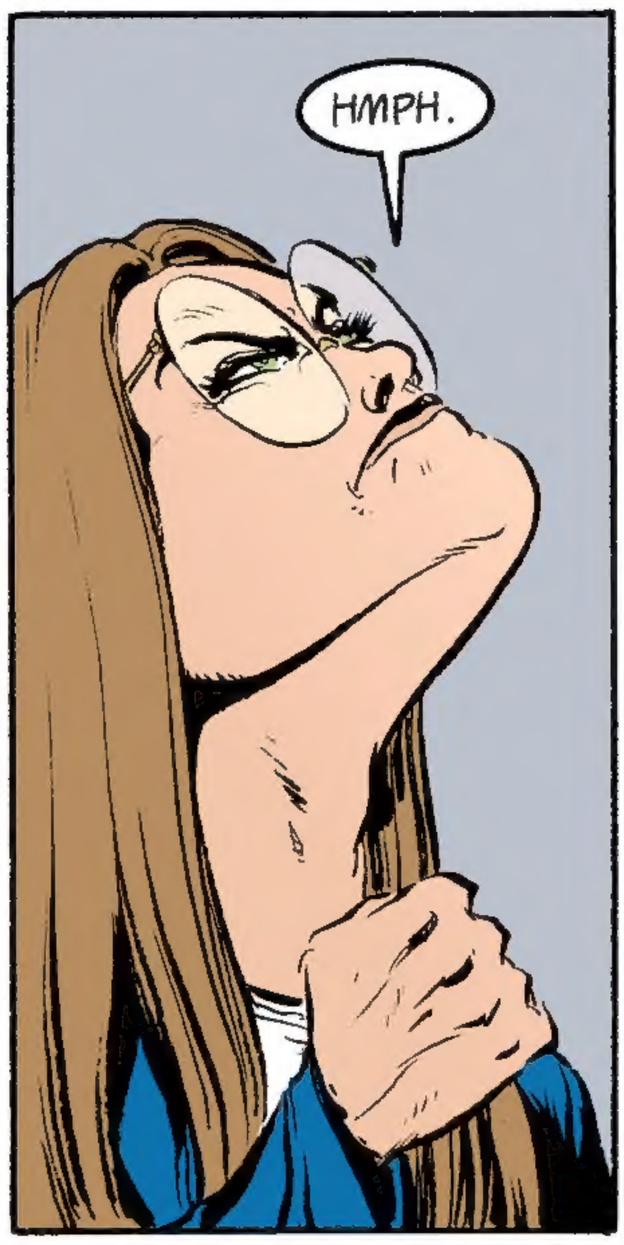
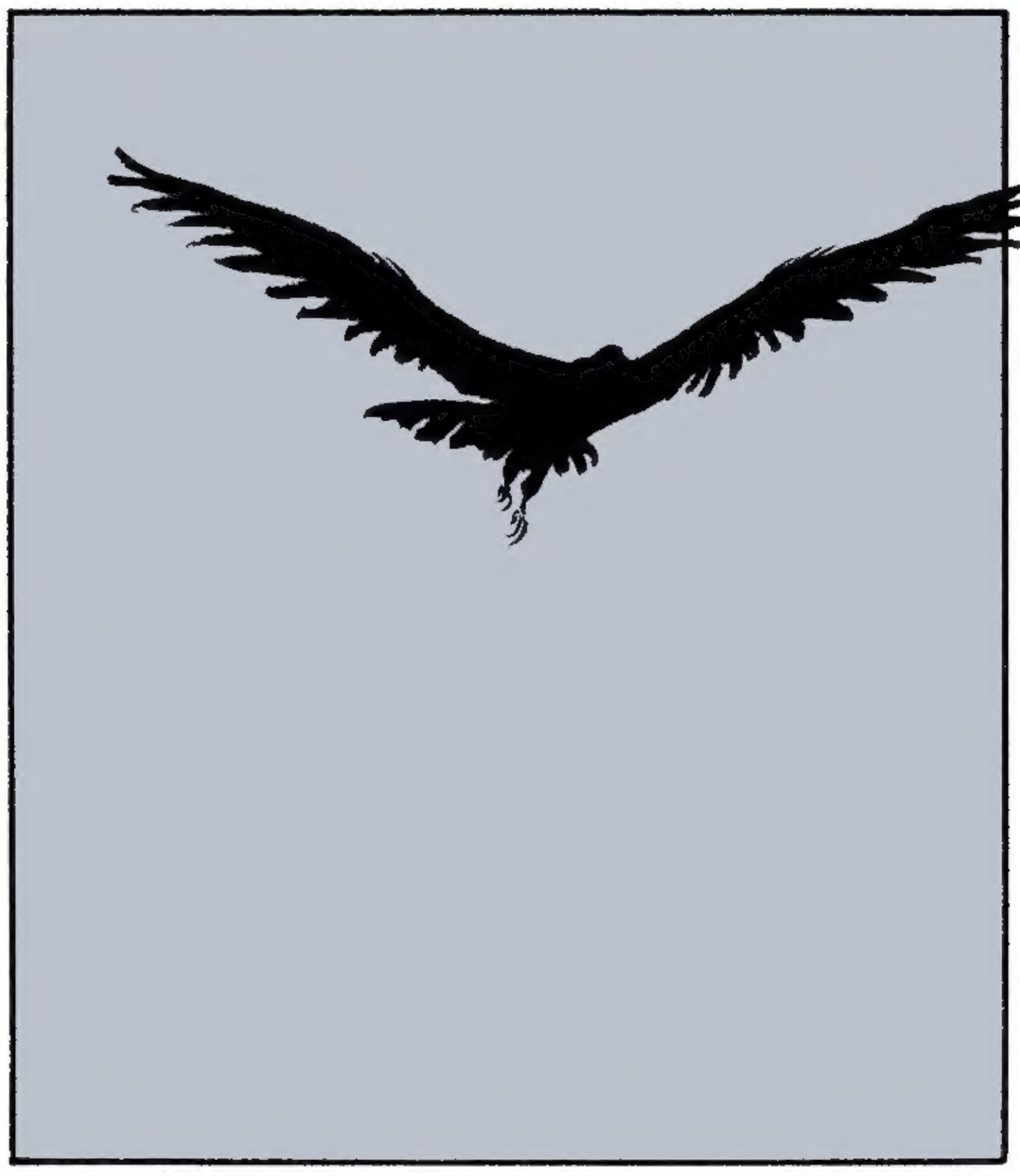

HMPH.



THAT ONE NIGHT'S DREAM I PICK AT, SCAB-LIKE, IN MY HEAD.

MOST DREAMS VANISH AT DAY-BREAK. YOU FORGET.

NOT THIS. I DON'T FORGET...

OVER AND OVER AND OVER...

There, Barbara. She has gone, out of this dreamworld into worlds beyond your imagining or my dominion. She shall not trouble you again.

And perhaps your choice was wisest, after all.

You specified safe and sound, in your boon. Thus it will take a little time before I can send you all back.

I will take leave of you now, Barbara. I will be seeing you again; although you, for your part, are unlikely to see me.

OH. WELL.

NICE TO MEET YOU.

You two. You have been lucky. Understand me when I say that.

Little maiden, little mother. The future has strange journeys in store for both of you. But perhaps in future you should choose your travelling companions with more care.

And you. You have been foolish and unconsidered in your actions. You will hardly survive another century if you continue in this manner of behavior, lady.

I DON'T REMEMBER ASKING *YOUR* ADVICE, DREAM-KING.

It was freely given and well-meant.

Farewell.

I PROBABLY STILL SMELL LIKE THREE DAYS IN GREYHOUND BUSES AND STATIONS, BUT THERE'S ONLY SO MUCH YOU CAN DO WITH SOAP AND A WASHCLOTH IN THE JOHN...

NOT THAT WANDA'LL CARE, OF COURSE, BUT I DO WANT TO MAKE A GOOD IMPRESSION...

AFTER HE LEFT IT FELT LIKE WE SAT ON THE SAND FOREVER, WAITING TO WAKE UP.

HE COMES ON LIKE HE'S **SO** COOL. WHO DOES HE THINK HE'S FOOLING?

WELL, HE'S ***NOT*** FOOLING ME. ***OH*** NO.

THESS? CAN I ASK YOU A QUESTION?

SURE.

AND IT ***ISN'T*** EVEN AS IF HE'S GOOD-LOOKING. HE'S TOO ***THIN***, FOR A START.

HOW ***OLD*** ARE YOU?

I WAS BORN IN THE DAY OF GREATEST DARKNESS, IN THE YEAR THE BEAR TOTEM WAS SHATTERED.

WHAT'S *THAT* SUPPOSED TO MEAN?

HAZE, LEAVE HER ALONE. SHE'S UPSET...

BUT I WASN'T...

THEN THERE WAS THAT SENSATION YOU GET ON WAKING, AS EVERYTHING MOVED FURTHER AWAY, AND I STARTED TO BECOME AWARE OF THE COLD--

--AND IN MY DREAM IT WAS WARM, AND SO I TRIED TO STAY IN MY DREAM FOREVER, BUT THE HARDER I HELD ON THE FURTHER IT SLIPPED AWAY FROM ME...

AND THEN I

AND THEN I WOKE

AND THEN I WOKE UP.

ANYWAY...

SOMEHOW, I REALLY *AM* IN KANSAS...

WHAT THE HELL IS *THAT?*

DON'T RECKON I KNOW, BUT IT CAN SIT ON *MY* FACE ANY TIME IT WANTS TO.

HEE HEE HEE!

HOO HOO HOO!

ASSHOLES.

YOU MUST BE HER. AREN'T YOU? AREN'T YOU ALVIN'S FRIEND?

ALVIN? OH. YEAH, RIGHT. *YES,* I'M BARBIE.

SIT DOWN. YOU MUST BE EXHAUSTED. CAN I GET YOU ANYTHING?

JUST COFFEE, PLEASE.

HMM. ARE YOU HUNGRY, CHILD?

WELL, JUST A LITTLE...

...YES.

JENNY-SUE? FETCH ME TWO *LARGE* CUPS OF COFFEE, AND TWO SLICES OF BLUEBERRY PIE. *BIG* SLICES, Y'HEAR?

YES, DORA.

NOW.
WHAT'S THAT ON YOUR FACE?
IT'S A *VEIL*. I JUST DREW IT ON.
HMPH.
YOU AREN'T SOME KIND OF *WEIRDO*, ARE YOU, GIRL?
NO.
I *KNOW* THAT BOY WAS A SINNER.
BOY?
ALVIN. MY LATE NEPHEW. HOW *CLOSE* WERE YOU?
PRETTY CLOSE. SHE LIVED IN THE ROOM NEXT DOOR TO ME.
WE'D TALK A LOT. GO SHOPPING. YOU KNOW, JUST HANG OUT. *GIRL* TALK.
LISTEN, GIRL. WHEN YOU MEET EZEKIEL AND JOAN-ELLEN, WELL, *THEY* AREN'T BROAD-MINDED LIKE ME. YOU MAKE SURE THAT YOU TALK ABOUT THEIR *SON*.
THEY'VE BEEN HURT *ENOUGH* BY ALL THIS. YOU DON'T WANT TO MAKE THINGS *ANY* HARDER FOR THEM. YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT I'M SAYING?
MM-HMM.
IT'S FUNNY. IT'S OUT HERE YOU EXPECT TWISTERS AND FREAK WEATHER. NOT IN NEW YORK.
NO. *NOBODY* EXPECTED IT.
YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT?
I...
OKAY, LADIES... *HERE'S* YOUR COFFEE.
AND *HERE'S* THE PIE.
THANK YOU.
THANKS, JENNY-SUE.
HEY. YOU A FRIEND OF *ALVIN*? THE MANN BOY?
YES.
I WAS AT HIGH SCHOOL WITH HIM. *WEIRD* KID. STILL, WE WERE ALL SORRY TO HEAR.
THANKS.
I... THE LAST TIME I SAW... YOUR NEPHEW... ALIVE... IT WAS THE NIGHT BEFORE THE STORM.
YOU SEE, I WAS *ASLEEP* WHEN IT HAPPENED. I MISSED OUT ON THE WHOLE THING-- HURRICANE AND ALL.
=*phhhhht*.= BET IT GAVE YOU BAD DREAMS, THOUGH. WHEN *I* SLEPT THROUGH THE TWISTER WE HAD HERE A FEW YEARS BACK, I DREAMED I WAS IN THE *WAR* AND THEY WERE DROPPING BOMBS...
YES. I HAD DREAMS.

SO THEN WHAT?

THEN I WOKE UP, AND I WAS SOAKING WET, AND IT WAS DAY-LIGHT, AND THERE WASN'T ANY HOUSE ANYMORE. I WAS UNDER A PILE OF RUBBLE...

"YOU KNOW...WHAT WAS WEIRD WAS WHAT SAVED MY LIFE.

"THERE WAS A **WOMAN** ON TOP OF ME. SHE WAS **DEAD.** THIS LITTLE OLD WOMAN. HER NAME WAS MAISIE HILL, AND I'D NEVER MET HER BEFORE. AND SHE WAS ON **TOP** OF ME.

"SHE WAS CRUSHED BY FALLING BRICKS.

"SHE WAS **KILLED.** WANDA WAS KILLED. AND THIS GUY UPSTAIRS WAS KILLED. **GEORGE**--THAT WAS **REALLY** NASTY. HE MUST HAVE BEEN IN THE **BATHTUB** WHEN IT HAPPENED.

"HIS WHOLE UPPER BODY WAS **COMPLETELY** MASHED UP."

POOR GUY. I MEAN, HE **WAS** KIND OF **CREEPY,** BUT HE NEVER DID ANYONE ANY **HARM.** NO ONE DESERVES TO GO LIKE THAT...

SO THEY PULLED YOU OUT OF THE WRECKAGE...

YEAH. IT WAS THE EMERGENCY SERVICES. THEY WERE PRETTY GOOD. AND YOU KNOW THE FIRST THING I SAW WHEN I CAME OUT?

MY NEPHEW?

"**UH-UH.** A TV CAMERA. I'M FREEZING AND BRUISED AND THEY'VE PULLED THIS POOR OLD WOMAN OFF ME, AND I'M JUST NUMB INSIDE --I'M IN **SHOCK**-- AND YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENS?"

I'M MARY GENTIAN, VIEWERS, AND THIS IS JUST **ONE** OF THE **MANY** MANHATTAN PROPERTIES THAT WAS EFFECTIVELY **DEMOLISHED** BY LAST NIGHT'S HURRICANE --**MEAN LISA** AS THEY'RE ALREADY CALLING HER.

BEHIND ME YOU CAN SEE--

HEY! LADY! GET YOUR FRIGGIN' **BUTT** OUT THE FRIGGIN' **WAY.** WE GOT TO GET THIS WOMAN TO THE **HOSPITAL.**

LISTEN, BUSTER, I HAVE A FIRST AMENDMENT RIGHT TO BROADCAST--

AND **I** HAVE A FIRST AMENDMENT RIGHT TO BUST YOUR FRIGGIN' **CHOPS** IF YOU DON'T MOVE...

AND *THAT* WAS WHEN I SAW WANDA.

ALVIN.

SHE WAS IN ONE OF THOSE BIG PLASTIC BAGS. WHAT ARE THEY CALLED? BODY BAGS? YOU COULD SEE *EVERYTHING*. SHE LOOKED LIKE SHE WAS ASLEEP. *THAT* WAS THE SCARY THING...

"I WANTED TO REACH OUT AND WAKE HER UP. I FOUND MYSELF THINKING ABOUT PLASTIC BAGS, AND HOW *DANGEROUS* IT IS TO PUT THEM OVER YOUR HEAD BECAUSE YOU CAN'T BREATHE AND YOU CAN *SUFFOCATE* AND EVERYTHING--

"--AND I THINK THAT WAS WHEN I WENT KIND OF *HYSTERICAL* BECAUSE THEY TOLD ME LATER I WAS JUST *SHOUTING* AT THEM, TELLING THEM TO GET HER *OUT* OF THE BAG AND GET SOME *CLOTHES* ON HER AND...

"AND...

"AND...

"AND..."

IT'S *OKAY*, HONEY.

IT'S OKAY.

I'M SORRY.

CAN WE HAVE SOME MORE COFFEE OVER HERE?

LIKE I SAY. I WAS PRETTY MUCH OUT OF MY MIND BY THAT POINT.

I REMEMBER SEEING-- WELL, NO, NOT SEEING, *IMAGINING*--THIS HUGE BRIGHT RED *SLUG*, LIKE A, I DON'T KNOW, LIKE SOME KIND OF TONGUE, SLITHERING THROUGH THE RUBBLE...

SO, UH, HOW ABOUT THE OTHER PEOPLE IN THE BUILDING? THEY WEREN'T HURT?

WELL, HAZEL AND FOXGLOVE-- THEY WERE TWO FRIENDS WHO LIVED UPSTAIRS FROM ME. *THEY* WERE FINE. AND THESSALY--SHE WAS ACROSS THE WAY-- I THINK *SHE* WAS FINE TOO.

THESSALY? ISN'T THAT A PLACE IN GREECE OR SOMEWHERE LIKE THAT?

MAYBE. I DON'T KNOW. WE *NEVER* TALKED MUCH.

SCARLETT--SHE OWNS THE BUILDING, AND LIVED ON THE VERY TOP FLOOR. SHE WAS VISITING SOME FRIENDS IN MAINE THAT WEEK.

SCARLETT CAME TO SEE ME IN THE HOSPITAL. SHE WAS REALLY UPSET. SHE SAYS THE INSURANCE COULD TAKE *YEARS* TO PAY UP. AND SHE WAS REALLY FOND OF WANDA.

IT MUST HAVE BEEN VERY TRAUMATIC FOR YOU.

YES.

=phhhhht.= WELL...IT'S PROBABLY A *MERCY*. THE GOOD LORD TAKING ALVIN IN TO HIS BOSOM WHEN HE WAS READY.

OTHERWISE HE'D PROBABLY HAVE DIED UP THE LINE FROM *AIDS* OR SOMESUCH--OH, YOU DON'T HAVE TO *SAY* ANYTHING, *I* KNOW WHAT THAT BOY WAS LIKE.

GOD GIVES YOU A BODY, IT'S YOUR *DUTY* TO DO WELL BY IT. HE MAKES YOU A BOY, YOU DRESS IN BLUE, HE MAKES YOU A GIRL, YOU DRESS IN PINK.

YOU MUSTN'T GO TRYING TO *CHANGE* THINGS.

HOW WAS THE RIDE HERE?

SHITTY. LONG. CRAMPED.

YEAH.

C'MON, JENNY-SUE. THE *FUNERAL* WILL BE *STARTING* SOON.

YOU MISSED THE OPEN COFFIN AT HIS FOLKS' PLACE--ALVIN LOOKED PRETTY GOOD, AFTER THE MORTICIANS WERE THROUGH WITH HIM.

THEY CUT HIS HAIR AND PUT HIM IN A SUIT AND EVERYTHING.

BUT...WANDA WAS ALWAYS SO *PROUD* OF HER HAIR...

YOU GONNA BE IN TOWN LONG?

I DON'T THINK SO. I'M JUST HERE FOR THE FUNERAL.

WELL, YOU COME BACK ANY TIME YOU NEED A GOOD MEAL, AND WE'LL FATTEN YOU UP SOME.

"SO WHERE ARE YOU LIVING, NOW YOUR APARTMENT'S BLOWN AWAY?"

"I--I DON'T REALLY ***KNOW***. I DON'T HAVE A JOB, AND MY SAVINGS ARE ALMOST GONE. I STILL GET AN ALIMONY CHECK, AND THAT HELPS A LITTLE, WHEN KEN REMEMBERS TO SEND IT..."

SO I DON'T ***KNOW*** WHERE I'LL BE LIVING.

WHEN I WAS READY TO GET OUT OF THE HOSPITAL THEY GAVE ME YOUR CARD ABOUT WANDA'S FUNERAL, AND I JUST CALLED YOU AND BOUGHT MY BUS TICKET AND CAME...

I MAY NOT GO BACK TO NEW YORK. I MAY JUST KEEP GOING WEST.

BUT SURELY YOU WANT TO GO HOME?

I...I'M NOT SURE ABOUT THAT. I DON'T THINK HOME'S A PLACE ANYMORE. I THINK IT'S A STATE OF MIND.

I SEE. HOW ABOUT THE OTHER PEOPLE IN YOUR HOUSE?

WELL, HAZEL AND FOXGLOVE HAVE MOVED UPSTATE TO STAY WITH HAZEL'S MOTHER.

HAZEL'S A CHEF, AND SHE'LL GET ANOTHER JOB EASY. AND FOX CAN WRITE ANYWHERE, SO ***THEY'LL*** BE OKAY.

AND THESSALY... *I* DON'T KNOW. I'M SURE SHE'LL BE FINE. SHE'LL JUST GET ANOTHER ROOM SOMEWHERE.

THESSALY'S A ***SURVIVOR***. I MEAN, SHE'S REALLY QUIET, AND I'M SURE WHEN YOU GET TO KNOW HER SHE'S REALLY SWEET.

BUT SOMETIMES I THINK MAYBE THERE'S MORE GOING ON ON THE INSIDE THAN YOU'D IMAGINE. I DUNNO.

I'M SURE SHE'LL BE FINE.

PLEASE.

DON'T UPSET THEM.

IT'S ALVIN, OKAY?

YEAH. I SUPPOSE.

ZEKE? JOAN-ELLEN? THIS IS BARBARA. ALVIN'S FRIEND FROM NEW YORK.

MR. MANN.

THANK YOU FOR COMING ALL THIS WAY TO SHOW YOUR RESPECTS, GIRL. 'PRECIATE IT.

HOW DO YOU DO, MRS. MANN.

THE HURRICANE. IT WAS GOD'S JUDGMENT ON A CITY OF SINNERS.

BARBARA? THE SERVICE IS STARTING.

WHY DON'T YOU STAND AT THE BACK?

DORA--WHAT'S THAT SHE'S DONE TO HER FACE?

PAINTED A VEIL ON, ZEKE. THAT'S WHAT THEY ALL DO IN NEW YORK.

DORA--I DON'T WANT *THAT* GIRL COMING BACK TO THE HOUSE FOR COFFEE AND CAKES AFTERWARDS, WHAT WITH THE PEOPLE WE'VE GOT COMING OVER.

THIS TOWN'S GOING TO REMEMBER ALVIN AS THE GOD-FEARING CHILD THAT HE *SHOULD* HAVE BEEN.

THAT'S NOT WHAT I'D CALL *HOSPITABLE*, JOAN-ELLEN. SHE'S COME A LONG WAY, AND SHE'LL BE GOING BACK THIS EVENING.

WELL, I DIDN'T ASK HER.

...OR EVER THE SILVER CORD BE LOOSED, OR THE GOLDEN BOWL BE BROKEN, OR THE PITCHER BE BROKEN AT THE FOUNTAIN, OR THE WHEEL BROKEN AT THE CISTERN.

THEN SHALL THE DUST RETURN TO THE EARTH AS IT WAS: AND THE SPIRIT RETURN UNTO GOD WHO GAVE IT.

THE SERVICE DRONES TO ITS END. I REALIZE THAT I'M *ALREADY* BEGINNING TO FORGET WHAT WANDA LOOKED LIKE.

IS IDENTITY *THAT* FRAGILE?

THE THOUGHT SCARES ME.

AFTERWARD THEY PREPARE TO GO BACK TO THE MANNS' FOR COFFEE AND CAKE, AND DORA TELLS ME THEY'D RATHER I WASN'T THERE, WHICH IS FINE BY ME.

I'VE GOT A FEW THINGS TO SAY TO WANDA ON MY OWN.

DORA SAYS SHE'LL WAIT FOR ME IN THE CAR.

THEY LEAVE IN KNOTS AND CLUSTERS, AND LIKE A FLOCK OF HUGE BLACK BIRDS THEY STRUT BACK TO THEIR PICK-UP TRUCKS AND STATION-WAGONS AND HEARSES.

ALVIN
ROBERT CALEB
MANN
1966-1991
"For they have
sown the wind,
and they shall reap
the whirlwind."
HOSEA VIII, 7

WELL, YOU *REALLY* DID IT *THIS* TIME.
MAKING ME COME ALL THIS WAY, JUST TO SAY *GOODBYE*.

I NEVER KNEW THAT PLACES AROUND HERE HAD SUCH BEAUTIFUL *NAMES*. I WAS WATCHING THE ROAD SIGNS FROM THE BUS.
IT GAVE ME SOMETHING TO DO.
CLOVERDALE, FLORISSANT, MULBERRY GROVE, BOONVILLE, SALINA, AURORA AND GOODLAND...
THEY SOUND LIKE THE NAMES OF MAGIC KINGDOMS, DON'T THEY?

YOUR AUNT SEEMS OKAY.
WANDA?
I *WISH* YOU WERE HERE. I MEAN, FOR A START YOU COULD GO SOME WAY TOWARD TELLING ME HOW COME I WAS UP IN GEORGE'S ROOM. *AND* HOW COME *YOU* WERE.

AND WHY GEORGE WAS IN THE BATH. AND WHY FOX AND HAZEL SEEM TO BE *AVOIDING* ME...
...AND WHO THE OLD LADY WAS WHO SAVED MY LIFE.

I MEAN, WHO *WAS* SHE, WANDA? *MAISIE HILL*. I'VE NEVER EVEN HEARD HER *NAME* BEFORE.
I WENT TO *HER* FUNERAL LAST WEEK. I WAS ABOUT THE ONLY ONE THERE.
JUST ME AND HER DAUGHTER. THAT WAS ALL.

I WISH YOU WERE STILL AROUND. THERE'S THIS *IDEA* I'VE GOT, AND IT'S SOMETHING I HAVEN'T MANAGED TO PUT INTO WORDS PROPERLY, AND I *KNOW* IF YOU WERE HERE YOU COULD HELP ME TO...

OKAY. *HERE* GOES. BARBIE'S IDEA.

IT'S LIKE, THAT PEOPLE...

WELL, THAT *EVERYBODY* HAS A SECRET *WORLD* INSIDE OF THEM.

I MEAN *EVERYBODY.* ALL OF THE PEOPLE IN THE WHOLE WORLD--NO MATTER *HOW* DULL AND BORING THEY ARE ON THE OUTSIDE.

INSIDE THEM THEY'VE *ALL* GOT UNIMAGINABLE, MAGNIFICENT, WONDERFUL, STUPID, AMAZING *WORLDS*...

NOT JUST ONE WORLD. *HUNDREDS* OF THEM. *THOUSANDS,* MAYBE.

ISN'T *THAT* A WEIRD THOUGHT?

ANYWAY, I *GOT* YOU SOMETHING. A PRESENT.

THERE.

80pg. GIANT 25¢

HYPERMAN

FEATURING TALES OF THE WEIRDZO WORLD!

"IN ORDER TO BUY IT I HAD TO GO INTO THIS BIZARRE LITTLE STORE. I MEAN, I DON'T THINK THEY'D SWEPT THE FLOOR IN A DECADE, AND I BET THE STAFF *HAD* TO HAVE TAKEN UNHELPFULNESS LESSONS.

SALE

"AND THERE WAS A BIG *GREASY GUY* BEHIND THE COUNTER WHO SEEMED *REALLY* AMUSED THAT I WAS LIKE, FEMALE, AND ASKING FOR THIS COMIC.

"HE SAID IT *WASN'T* VERY COLLECTABLE. THEN HE SAID THEY DIDN'T NORMALLY SEE BREASTS AS *SMALL* AS MINE IN HIS STORE, AND ALL THESE GUYS LAUGHED."

I WANTED *YOU* TO BE THERE SO BADLY.

YOU WOULD HAVE SAID SOMETHING TO HIM THAT WOULD HAVE BLISTERED HIS EARS AND CURLED HIS TOES AND MADE HIM FEEL LIKE HE WAS SIX INCHES HIGH.

I JUST BLUSHED AND LEFT, MAD ON THE INSIDE.

HERE YOU GO.

OH, YEAH. AND HERE...

I THOUGHT YOU'D LIKE IT. IT'S *TACKY FLAMINGO*, OR WHATEVER IT'S CALLED. YOUR FAVORITE COLOR.

WANDA ALVIN

HEY, NO PROBLEM.

LEAST I COULD DO.

YOU DONE?

EVERYTHING I HAD TO DO.

WELL, GET IN, GIRL. I'LL DRIVE YOU BACK DOWN TO THE BUS STATION.

SO, WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO NOW?

MM. YOU KNOW WHAT MY MOM ALWAYS USED TO SAY?

SHE SAID WHEN I WAS A LITTLE GIRL I'D GO OFF AND PLAY FOR HOURS ON END.

AND WHEN SHE *ASKED* ME, SHE'D ALWAYS GET THE SAME ANSWER. "WHERE YOU BEEN?" "OUT."

"WHAT YOU BEEN DOING?" "NOTHING."

YEAH. ALL KIDS SAY THAT.

THEY *DO*? I THOUGHT IT WAS JUST *ME*.

ANYWAY, *THAT'S* WHAT I'M GOING TO DO NOW.

HOW DO YOU MEAN?

WHERE AM I *GOING*?

OUT.

WHAT AM I GOING TO *DO*?

NOTHING.

YOU SEE, I *USED* TO BE A PRINCESS. I HAD A *CUCKOO* IN MY HEAD.

OH.

WELL... ISN'T THAT NICE...

WE TAKE THE REST OF THE DRIVE BACK IN SILENCE. AND SUDDENLY I'M REMEMBERING.

IT'S YESTERDAY: I'M ON A GREYHOUND BUS, DUE TO GET IN TO INDIANAPOLIS ABOUT 4:00 AM.

OUTSIDE IT'S SLUSH AND SLEET, AND INSIDE WE'RE ALL UNCOMFORTABLE AND THE MAN IN THE SEAT IN FRONT OF ME KEEPS WHISPERING, "MR. WIGGLY HASN'T GOT NO NOSE" TO HIMSELF, THEN BURSTING INTO TEARS.

I CAN HEAR THE *SLOOSH, SLOOSH* OF THE WINDSHIELD WIPERS. UP UNTIL NOW, I HAVEN'T FELT TIRED, BUT NOW SUDDENLY MY CHIN BEGINS TO DIVE DOWNWARD, AND THE SECOND OR THIRD TIME THIS HAPPENS I GO WITH IT.

I DREAM OF WANDA. ONLY SHE'S PERFECT. SHE REMINDS ME OF GLINDA IN THE OZ MOVIE, SOMETHING I'M SURE SHE'D GET A HUGE KICK OUT OF HEARING.

AND WHEN I SAY PERFECT, I MEAN PERFECT. DROP-DEAD GORGEOUS. THERE'S NOTHING CAMP ABOUT HER, NOTHING ARTIFICIAL. AND SHE LOOKS HAPPY.

WANDA'S WITH THIS WOMAN I DON'T KNOW. AND THE WOMAN GOES UP ON TIPPIE-TOE AND WHISPERS SOMETHING INTO WANDA'S EAR.

THEN WANDA TURNS AROUND AND SHE SEEMS TO SEE ME, AND SHE WAVES.

THEY BOTH WAVE.

AND I'M GOING TO WAVE BACK; BUT THE BUS PULLS INTO THE STATION, AND THEY OPEN THE DOOR, AND IT'S FREEZING, AND WE ALL GET OFF THE BUS AND TRY TO PERSUADE A BUSTED SOUP MACHINE TO GIVE US SOMETHING HOT TO DRINK...

AND IF THERE'S A MORAL THERE, I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS, SAVE MAYBE THAT WE SHOULD TAKE OUR GOODBYES WHENEVER WE CAN.

AND THAT'S ALL.

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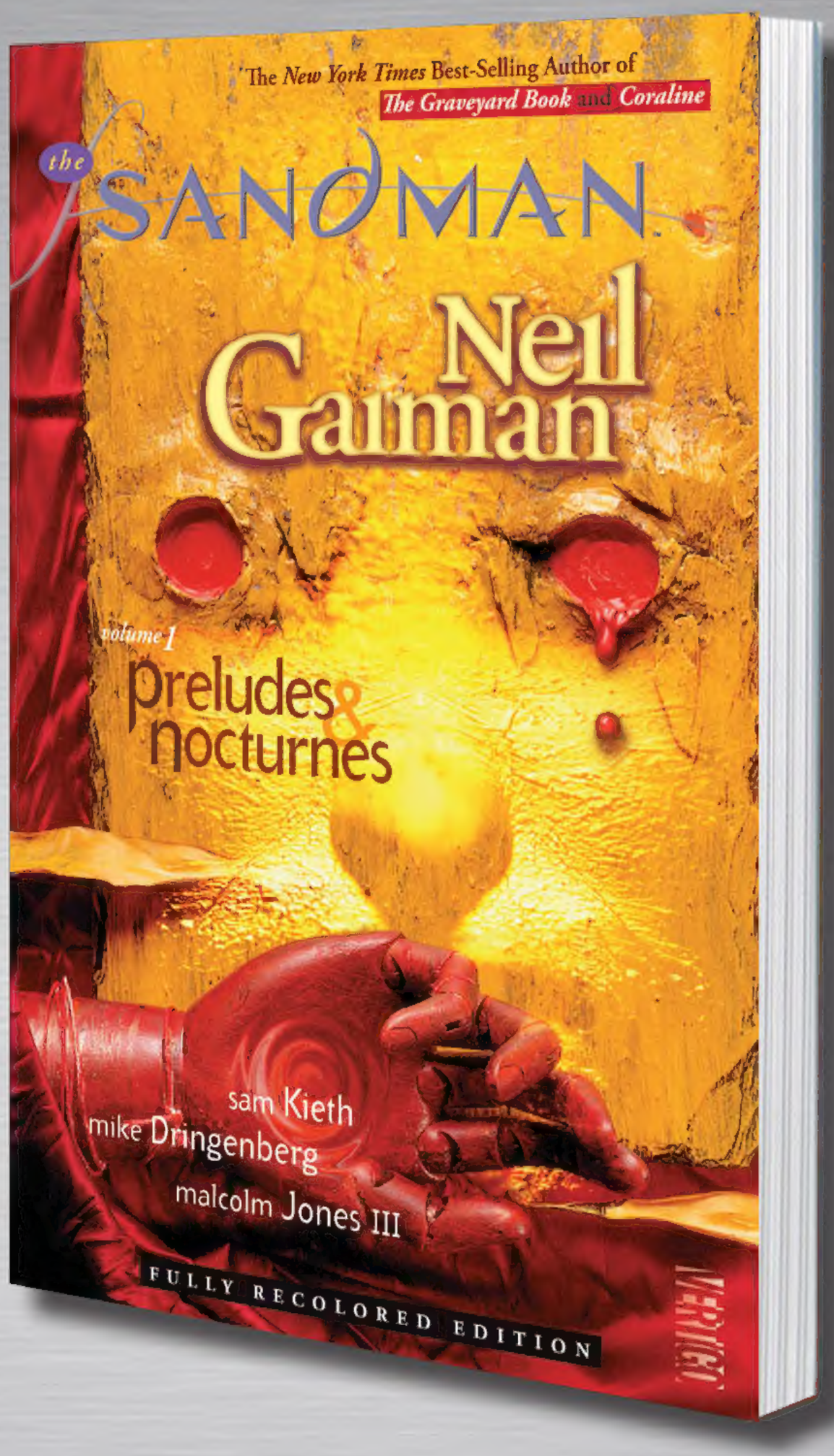
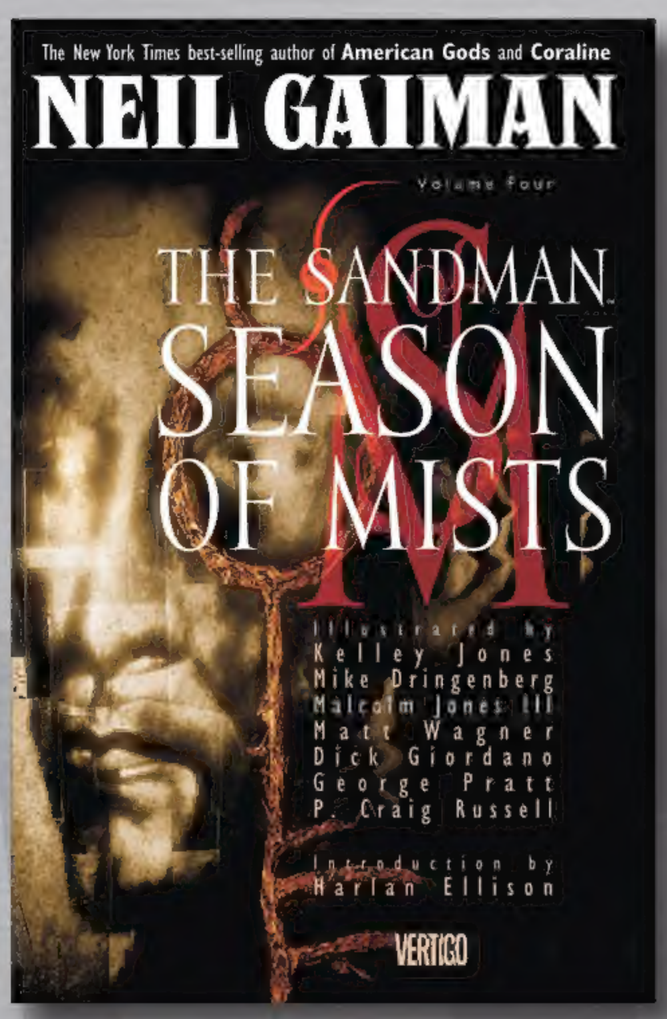


THE SANDMAN VOL. 4:
SEASON OF MISTS



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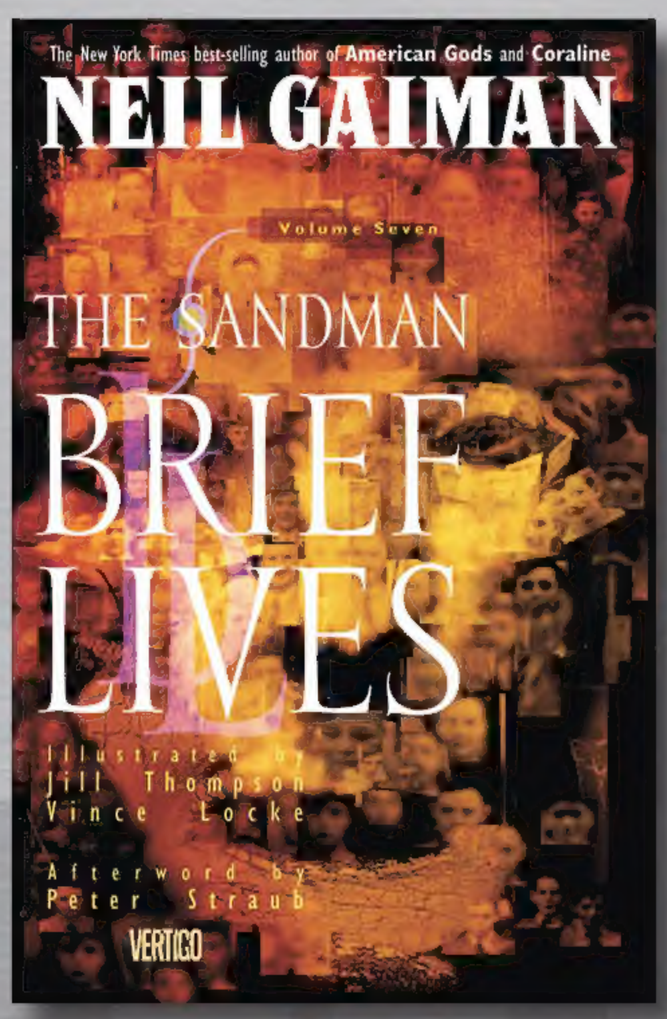
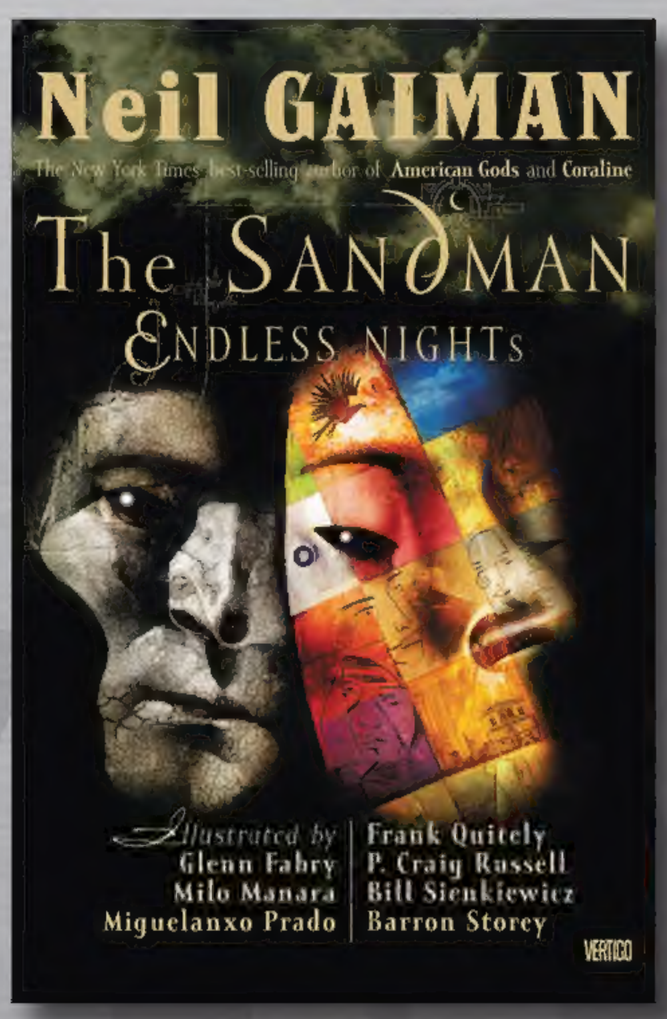
BRIEF LIVES



THE SANDMAN:
ENDLESS NIGHTS



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